



KHALKHAL I. THE TOWN AND DISTRICT

KHALKHAL

i. The Town and District

Historical data. Mentions of Khalkhal and of some of its subdistricts and localities appeared relatively late in medieval geographical and historical chronicles. The first place within the area that is mentioned is Kūnaj, referred to by Eṣṭakrī (pp. 181, 194), Ebn Ḥawqal (pp. 239, 253), Moqaddasi (pp. 375, 383), and Abu'l-Fedā as a stage on the road from Ardabil to Miāna (Schwarz, pp. 1145-47), and in *Ḥodud al-'ālam* (called Kūna) as a small town in Azarbaijan (p. 158; tr., p. 142). Yāqut (II, pp. 499-500; Barbier de Meynard, p. 219), in the early 13th century, explained that the correct ancient name of Kūnaj had been deformed into the form Kūnā, and that the place was then called Kāgaḍ-konān (paper-makers), which afterwards became the name of one of the five traditional subdistricts of Khalkhal. He visited the place, which was small and half-ruined but still had a beautiful bazaar.

The name Khalkhal is first mentioned by Yāqut as a town and district (*kura*) adjacent to Gilan in the middle of lofty mountains, where most of its villages and farms are located. He crossed it himself when he was fleeing the Mongol invasion in Khorasan in 617/1220 (Yāqut, II, p. 459; Barbier de Meynard, pp. 210-11). The town had replaced the former seat of the governor of the district,



Firuzābād, located at the highest point of the Bardaliz pass, when it fell into ruins; but Khalkhal itself was in turn ruined as well. Ḥamd-Allāh Mostawfi (pp. 81-82; tr., p. 84) added to Yāqut's informations the fact that Khalkhal was just a village in his time, with four subdistricts of Kāmeda-bil (nowadays Kān Andabil), Sajasrud (cf. Sajahrud, now a village of the Qezel Ozon valley), Anjilābād (no present-day locality with this name could be found), and Misjin or Hišjin (present-day Hešajin subdistrict; Razmārā, pp. 183, 263, 548), together comprising about 100 villages.

Šāhrud, a present-day district (*baḳš*) of Khalkhal, is mentioned by Yāqut (Barbier de Meynard, pp. 344-45) and Mostawfi (p. 82; tr., p. 85) and described as a district (*welāyat*) adjacent to Tawāleš, with some thirty villages, including Šāl, Kalur (now Kolur), Ḥameš (now Kemes), Dorud (Derow), and Kilevān (Gilavān; Razmārā, pp. 196, 212, 290, 423, 472). The isolated situation of this mountainous area, which lasted well through the 19th century, is reflected in the narrative of James Fraser describing his experience of traveling from Gilan to Tabriz (Fraser, 1826, pp. 235-39).

The land and its people. In its traditional limits, the Khalkhal district includes five subdistricts. Three of them, namely Sanjabad, Kān-andabil, and Šāhrud (from the north to the south), are located near the Tāleš chain, which separates them from Gilan; and to the southwest are the two subdistricts of Koreš Rostam and Kāgaḍ-konān. They encompass the catchment basins of a few streams flowing into the Qezel Ozon/Safidrud river, which marks roughly the boundary between Sanjabad and Hešajin to the north and Kāgaḍ-konān to the south, mainly on the left bank. They are, successively, the Ārpā Čāy river receiving the Sangavar Čāy and the Heruābādrud, the Rud-e Kandaraq, the Rud-e Lerd, and the Šāhrud (Ja'fari, pp. 93-94, 274, 290, 477). The continental, semi-arid climate gives rather low precipitations (406 mm in Heruābād, with maximum rainfall in spring and marked summer drought) and a temperature range of 24° C between very cold winters and moderately warm summers, resulting in a steppe vegetation belonging to the Irano-Turanian floristic zone.

The population is generally perceived as Turkish by Persians of central Iran as well as by the Tāleš and Gilaks of Gilan, but Āzeri Turkish is not the mother tongue of the whole population, which includes two important groups speaking languages of the Iranian family. These correspond to two different layers in the history of settlement of the region (see also Bazin, II, pp. 83-87).

The first group, the Tāti-speaking Tāts, is a testimony to continuity up to the



present of settlement that existed before the turkicization of Azarbaijan (Planhol, pp. 213-15). A relatively limited number of Turkic nomadic invaders converted the local population to their language, but the inhabitants of small or large enclaves, called Tāts by their Turkish rulers, kept the use of their Iranian language, Tāti, split in a number of dialects. A continuous Tāti-speaking area stretches along the Šāhrud valley, grouping twenty-five villages and the greatest part of the population of the Šāhrud subdistrict (Yarshater, 1959). It goes on towards the southeast in the neighboring subdistrict of Tārom bound to the province of Zanjān (Yārshāter, 1970). Another slightly different dialect is spoken in the village of Kajal in the Kāgaḍ-konān subdistrict, and at least another one in the small village of Ālādin or 'Alā'-al-Din, 12 km to the north in Sanjabad subdistrict, populated in the 1940s by families from Kajal (Yarshater, 1960). The predominant situation in all these villages is generalized multilingualism. People are at least bilingual, speaking both Tāti and Azeri Turkish, but most of them are trilingual, since they know Persian as well. Some among the Tāts of Šāhrud are even quadrilingual. They also know Ṭāleši and claim a relative proximity between their dialect and the Ṭāleši dialects of the adjacent districts of Māsāl and Šāndarman.

Another iranophone linguistic minority results from a relatively recent migration process. Kurds of the area still keep in their collective memory the tradition of having been transferred from Qučān in the northeast to Khalkhal by Nāder Shah Afšār (r. 1736-47) in the 18th century (see [DEPORTATIONS iii](#)). They represent a striking example of the policy of systematic transfer of nomadic tribes followed by sovereigns of Persia between the 16th and the 19th centuries (Planhol, pp. 249-50), since they had been previously transferred from Kurdistan to Qučān under the Safavids (Curzon, I, pp. 97-99). The main area of Kurdish settlements is located in the northern part of the district, with a compact group of some fifteen villages north of Heruābād along the upper valley of Ārpā Čāy and its tributaries, where Kurdish language was still fully in use in 1976 (Bazin, II, pp. 86-87). Although they have long been sedentarized, most of them follow an active pastoral life, which sometimes brings them into conflicts with their Ṭāleš neighbours for the use of summer pastures along the ridge of the chain. They all belong to various clans of the Šāṭrānlu tribe. The use of Kurdish seems to have gradually faded away in another group of a dozen of villages farther to the northwest, along the valley of the Sangavār Čāy, where Razmārā mentioned (ca. 1950) the existence of either Kurdish-speaking population or the presence of clans of the Šāṭrānlu tribe. At the opposite extremity of the Khalkhal district, a smaller group of Kurdish-



speaking villages are interspersed among Tāt and Turkish villages: Sajahrud and Ja'farābād on both sides of the lower Šāhrud valley and Alankoš, Aḥmadābād and Čamlu Gabin along a lateral valley (field data collected by the author in 1974).

As for religious affiliation, the population is mostly Shi'ite. On the one hand, a few above-mentioned Kurdish villages had at least partly maintained their original Sunnite faith around 1950 in Āgča Qešlāq, Perānlu, and Kalestān in northern Khalkhal and until 1976 in Ja'farābād and Sajahrud in southeastern Khalkhal (field data collected by the author in 1974-76). On the other hand, a small but compact group of Turkish and partly Tāti-speaking villages of the northeastern part of Kāgād-konān subdistrict on the right bank of the Qezel Ozon, plus the lower quarter (*maḥalla*) of Hešajin, center of the Koreš Rostam district (*bakš*), not far from there on the opposite bank, has remained an active center of Sunnism and keeps tight relations with the Sunnite subdistrict (*dehestān*) of Asālem in central Tāleš, where many Sunnite shaikhs or *afandis* come from this small Sunnite core.

Economy. Rural life is dominated mostly by dry farming (*daym*) of cereals, already remarked in the 19th century by travelers such as James Morier (II, pp. 108-10), James Fraser (II, p. 503), and Friedrich Sarre (p. 216), and animal husbandry, which is a significant factor in the material and social framework of densely built villages constituted by groupings of mud brick houses with flat roofs (Bazin, II, pp. 87-91). As in most regions of interior Iran, the social structure was characterized by the concentration of cultivated land in the hands of big landlords (Bazin, II, pp. 92-95). Some Khalkhali families owned a great number of villages. For instance, eight villages around Firuzābād belonged to the Behzādi family and up to sixty villages all over the district were owned by the Panāhi family. The pressure of the landlords on their sharecroppers was, however, not so hard as in the desert regions of Iran, where the peasants had generally to give them between one-fourth and one-fifth of their crops. The land reform of the 1960s, which had been initiated in eastern Azarbaijan in the area of Marāḡa (see [Azarbaijan vi](#)), was implemented rather early in the *šahrestān* of Khalkhal. The total of 33 whole (*6-dāng*, i.e., belonging to one single person; Bazin, II, pp. 92-95) villages and parts of seventy other villages were already sold to 5,926 tenants during the first stage of the land reform. During the second stage 2,119 smaller landlords in 201 villages and 28 cultivated lands (*mazra'a*) chose to change the tenancy formula of 13,228 peasants from sharecropping to a fixed rent, while 7 pious



foundations (*waqf*) were divided among 261 tenants. Finally, the third stage achieved the shift to full property of all holdings through sale to 12,844 former renters. The social unity of villages is also observed through collectively organized rotation of crops, grouping threshing floors and heaps of blocks of dung and straw that provide the main domestic source of fuel at the periphery of settlements, or hiring shepherds for collective flocks.

Extensive areas are devoted to dry farming, for instance 52.8 percent of the land in the catchment basin of the Ārpā Čāy river, compared with only 7 percent of irrigated land (Doroudiān and Nikpay). They cover gentle slopes up to an altitude of 2,500 meters. Wheat and barley alternate with fallow in a biennial rotation cycle following the principles of dry farming. After the harvest, the field is plowed in autumn, either with the traditional quadrangular plow (*kīš*), with a long beam and a handle fastened to two vertical sticks, drawn by a pair of oxen (Bazin and Bromberger, pp. 20, 24) or with a disk harrow drawn by a tractor, so that winter precipitation might soak deeply into the soil. It is plowed once again in late spring, and then harrowed in order to make a thin surface earth layer to prevent evaporation during summer. At the beginning of the second agricultural year, in autumn, the field is plowed again and grain is sown; or for barley grown at the highest altitudes, that happens in the spring. This practice has led the peasants to measure areas by the quantity of grain sown, evaluated in weight (*man* of 3 kg throughout Azarbaijan), or in volume (*kila*, a cylindric bushel containing 3 to 4 kg of grain). For instance, *panj man zamin* (five *mans* of land) means a plot of land where 15 kg of wheat could be sown, even if it is a meadow or an orchard (Bazin and Bromberger, p. 54). Then harvest time will come between June and early August according to the altitude. Sheaves of wheat and barley are taken to the threshing floor, where the traditional methods of threshing, that is, under the paws of cattle and horses in Šāhrud and with a board with flintstones or iron blades underneath called *val* (the *tribulum* used in Mediterranean areas) elsewhere in the district (Bazin and Bromberger, pp. 30, 34 and map 16) have generally given the way to threshing machines or the use of disk harrows. In all cases, hatched straw is carefully collected in order to feed animals during the cold season.

If there is sufficient rainfall, leguminous plants (*ḥobubāt*) such as lentils, chickpeas, or vetches (see [BĀQELĀ](#)) can be sown in a part of the fallow land. In the most favorable conditions, a three-year rotation cycle can be followed, in the sequence winter cereals, spring cereals and leguminous plants, and



fallow. But the most efficient way of achieving more intensive cultivation is the development of irrigation, using diversion channels along the main river valleys or small subterranean channels (*qanāt*; see [KĀRIZ](#)) and springs. Thus it becomes possible to obtain higher and more regular yields of cereals and to grow fodder crops such as alfalfa (*yonja*) and sainfoin (*esperes*) as well as orchards of temperate fruit trees; for example on a length of 9 km downstream from Kivi-e Pā'in along the Ārpā Čāy river.

The other main local source of income for villagers is stock raising, and Khalkhal has long been celebrated for the high quality of its pastureland. The assertion that, according to Yāqut (Barbier de Meynard, p. 211), the grazing lands in Khalkhal were so good that the yoghurt produced in that district was thick enough to be cut with a knife is repeated by other authors, such as Mostawfi (p. 82; tr., p. 84). Cattle include oxen—gradually disappearing with the progress of mechanization—and milk cows, mules and donkeys as draft/pack animals; flocks are mainly composed of sheep, with a lesser number of goats. Every village has one herd of cattle, called *nakyr* and conducted by a *nakyrji*, and one or several flocks of sheep (*galla*) led by a shepherd (*čupān*). Both functions are paid by a share in dairy products and wool, wages in cash, or a combination of the two. The animals spend the cold season in stables, where they are fed with straw, fodder, and sometimes vetches, with the exception of some villages in the valley of Qezel Ozon, where winter pasture (*qešlāq*) is at a lower elevation. During the warm season, all the animals graze outside. As a rule, they are collected from every house in early morning by cowherds and shepherds, who take them to pastures around the village and bring them back to the families in the evening. In late summer they are taken to harvested fields in order to graze the remaining stubble (Bazin, II, pp. 102-3).

The mountains of Khalkhal have always been outside the pastoral routes of Šāhsavan nomads, but three groups of villages have continued to practice pastoral migrations, generally on an abbreviated scale. The Kurdish villages north of Heruābād take their herds and flocks to nearby summer pastures of the high ridge of the Tāleš chain. Whereas Yeylāq-e Lombar and Yeylāq-e Bolukānlu are real summer villages composed of stone houses with flat roofs, the other *yeylāqs* are only summer camps of tents or round huts similar to those of their Tāleš neighbors. In addition to the specialized cowherds and shepherds, a significant part of the families attend these summer settlements, where they till some small fields as well. By contrast, villages of Kōreš Rostam



east of Hešajin send their shepherds alone with the village flocks onto the slopes of the Āq Dāg mountain. A few settlements of the lower Qezel Ozon valley (and some other downstream in the adjacent *dehestān* of Tārom-e 'Olyā) conduct short-distance migrations to different pastoral levels with or without cultivated plots (Bazin, II, pp. 107-8).

Dairy products and textile crafts are naturally associated with animal husbandry (Bazin, II, pp. 109-12). Dairy products are prepared from the different kinds of milk without distinction (in contrast to the practice of the adjacent Tāleš pastoral area). These can be mixed, following the two traditional “technical chains” (Bazin and Bromberger, p. 35 and map 18). In the “yoghurt and butter chain,” two quite different types of churns are used: the Tāt inhabitants of Šāhrud use the same long pottery churn as their Tāleš neighbors, whereas the nomadic type, that is, a goatskin hung on a tripod, is the usual tool elsewhere. The “cheese chain,” has partly been taken in charge by specialized cheesemakers.

The important local wool production is worked by different textile crafts. *Šāl*, a thick fabric pressed with soapy water in order to make it relatively waterproof, is produced by specialized craftsmen in the Šāhrud valley. Ordinary rugs such as *palāz* and *jājim* are woven in most villages by women as a domestic activity, which is also the case for carpets (flat-woven *gelim* and knotted *qālī*) in the northern part of the district, perhaps under the influence of tradesmen from Ardabil (Bazin, II, pp. 109-12).

In spite of these various productions, the local resources seem to have long been unable to meet the needs of the population, which since the mid-19th century has developed a strong tradition of work migrations. According to Keith Abbott (p. 392), the British Consul in Tehran in the mid-19th century, thousands of workers from Khalkhal used to come every winter to Gilan to be engaged for forestry, agriculture, or construction work or for other activities requiring physical strength and great exertion. The same observation is made in more detail by Hyacinthe Rabino (p. 32; tr. p. 22):

A great number of people from Khalkhal seek employment in winter in the plains of Gilan. When they come down from their mountains, they carry all their belongings in a package suspended on the end of a stick. In cities, they attend the numerous *takias* devoted to the performing of mourning ceremonies during the month of Moḥarram. They know little more than plowing the land, digging ditches, using the flail to thresh paddy, sawing trees



or working in fisheries or on boats on the lagoon of Anzali. Their wages are minimal, but they receive food and other advantages. After four or five months of work in those conditions, they go back to their villages, where snow has melted and soil is ready to be tilled.

Both authors point out that the agricultural calendar in Khalkhal, where every activity but animal husbandry ceases during the long and cold winter, complements the demand for winter labor in the Caspian lowlands. These work migrations have retained an essential role in providing additional income to families from Khalkhal, and more widely to the Azarbaijani side of western Alborz (for details, see Bazin, II, pp. 119-45). The data collected for the year 1350/1971-72 by the administration of Eradication of Malaria of Khalkhal in its four eastern *dehestāns* (Bazin, p. 123 and map p. 124), recorded the figure 11,550 as the number of migrants from 171 villages, which means 11.6 percent of their total population of 99,500. Migrants were all adult men ranging in age from 15 to 65 years, making 26 percent of the adult population. In other words, nearly half of the male adult population left home for several months (four and a half in average) in search of work. Two groups of villages were noted for providing large number of migrant laborers: villages in the immediate periphery of Heruābād and those in the Šāhrud subdistrict.

In both cases, traffic facilities may have played a role in this high rate of migration. The opening of the Asālem-Khalkhal road in 1970 brought heavy traffic of buses and minibuses connecting Heruābād and its environs with Gilan and Tehran. Also, a new road linking Khalkhal to Kolur and Šāl serves minibus lines connecting Šāl to Māsāl and Rašt. While the Asālem-Khalkhal road was being paved across the mountains, the completion of a gravel road from Šāl to Māsula shortened the route toward Gilan and Tehran for migrants from Šāhrud. Communications have been greatly improved also in other directions: towards the north, the road is continuously paved from Heruābād to Ardabil via Kivi, and to the west a fair gravel road links the western part of the area to Miāna, where the old Tehran-Tabriz paved road leads to the motorway in Zanjān or in Bostānābād. A direct link exists also between this road and Āḡkand, the center of the *baḡš* of Kāḡaḡ-konān. Thus the mobility, which was already important in spite of very difficult traffic conditions, has been greatly facilitated (field data collected by the author in 1976 and 1992, and recent road maps).

These important flows of migrants takes different geographical and professional directions. The most ancient one was the work for paddy



cultivation in Gilan. Until the mid-20th century, workers from Khalkhal used to come during a great part of the cold season and begin to work by operating the traditional rice-husking device, the *pāđang*, or by clearing patches of plain forest to open new paddy fields, and then would take part in the preparation of paddies during late winter. Once clearing new agricultural land in the plain came to an end and manual husking was replaced by husking factories, this seasonal activity occupied only the end of the cold season. Additionally, the rapid mechanization of the process of plowing and harrowing paddies with small tillers resulted in a drastic decrease of this activity (Bazin, II, p. 126).

An alternative was presented to some of these migrants farther to the east by the strong development of citrus plantations in eastern Gilan and western Mazandaran, between Raḥimābād and Nowšahr (Bâlâi, pp. 187-91), since picking citrus fruits takes place from the end of November to the end of winter. Here Khalkhali workers enter along with mountaineers of eastern Gilan. Most of them are just manual laborers (*kārgar*) being paid in cash, but some have become well-to-do contractors (*peymānkār*) paying a lump-sum of money to the owner of orchards and selling the fruit for their own profit (Bazin, II, p. 127).

Another alternative activity attracts people from Khalkhal to the Caspian lowlands, and more precisely to the Caspian seashore. Here fishing scaly fish such as surmullet (*māhi safīd*), salmon (*māhi āzād*), carp (*kopur*), or sheatfish (*esbela*) is done during the cold season by men from a dozen villages of Kān Andabil subdistrict west of Heruābād. They are employed as wage-earning workers in a dozen of the Cooperative Societies of Fishing (*Šerkat-e ta'āwoni-e šayyādi*) located along the central section of the coast of Gilan, between Tāza-ābād and Yusofābād (Vieille and Nabavi; Bazin, II, pp. 137-39).

Petty traders (*dowragard*) from a dozen villages located close to the summital ridge of the Tāleš mountains along the Šāhrud valley and in the vicinity of Heruābād play a significant role in the commercial services of summer camps of central Tāleš, from the Māsāl valley to the Kargānrud valley. They both collect products of animal husbandry (cheese and wool) and provide sugar, tea, cigarettes, hardware, etc. Others have settled as shopkeepers in the commercial centers along the coastal plain of Tāleš.

Last but not least, a strong emigration flow has developed towards large cities, especially Tehran (Bazin, II, pp. 139-140). Very few migrants are unqualified workers, such as dockers in the port of Anzali or ordinary workers in



construction activities, since the process of “chain migration” recruiting new workers through family or neighborhood relationships has resulted in various local professional specializations, for instance housepainters from Kivi-e Pā’in, joiners and masons from Kohol or Derow, weavers and tailors from Asgestān, and technical building workers from Hešajin.

This need to seek seasonal employment outside of the region became more pressing in the mid-1970s, as there were few employment opportunities in commercial activities and public services in the area itself (for a similar situation around Yazd, see Bonine). Most of the villages, even large ones with more than 1,000 inhabitants, such as Kivi-e Bālā or Mejāra, had rudimentary commercial equipment with just some coffeehouses and grocery stores scattered within the built areas (e.g., see Kivi-e Bālā, in Bazin, II, pp. 156-57). Only some large villages along the road southeast of Heruābād, such as Kujin, Kemes, Asgestān, and Šāl, had several tens of shops, dispersed among houses. Kolur, Hešajin, and Kivi-e Pā’in added to that a number of administrations and public services as centers of the *bakš*; the latter was the only one to have about 300 shops gathered in a rather compact bazaar (Bazin II, pp. 158-59).

The only urban settlement was Heruābād, the center of the *šahrestān*, which had only 6,955 inhabitants in 1966 and 9,767 in 1976 (Bazin, II, pp. 184-85). Haruābād had been for long a village under the authority of the Sa’ādlu khans until its people managed to get rid of them during the reign of Fath-‘Ali Shah Qājār (r. 1797-1834). It was the center of a district in the *šahrestān* of Ardabil until 1948, when it was appointed by a state decree (*tašwib-nāma*) the center of a the new *šahrestān* of Khalkhal, receiving all the district administrations, military barracks, an agency of the National Bank (Bank-e Melli), one secondary school, four primary schools, and a hospital with thirty beds financed by a royal grant (Razmārā, pp. 546-47, the only detailed description of the town in the mid-20th century; see Torābi, pp. 501-2). Its bazaar of some 400 shops and workshops remained confined in a small historical core, on both sides of the river of Heruābād, which was crossed by two wood bridges. The main industrial activity was (masculine and feminine) craft weaving of *šāl* (see above), *karbās* (a plain cotton cloth), and *korjin/kurjin* (wool saddlebags). In early 1970s, a wide avenue following the general direction of the river was opened and became the main axis of development of the town (see map, in Bazin, II, p. 184). As a whole, the urbanization rate of the *šahrestān* has been quite low; the total of the populations of Heruābād and the four *bakš* centers was 16,812 persons in 1966 (13.5 percent of the total



šahrestān population).

Recent evolution and new administrative division. During the last four decades, the area saw an uneven evolution. As in most parts of Iran, there was an acceleration of urban growth, but quite unbalanced in regard to various localities and in favor of the center, Heruābād. Its population multiplied 5.54 times between 1966 and 2006, reaching 38,521 inhabitants in 2006, while Kivi, Hešajin, and Āḡkand gained respectively 62, 61, and 21 percent and Kolur lost 16 percent. The spatial expansion of Heruābād along its main axis has been spectacular, resulting in a 5-km long urbanized strip parallel to the river. In this regard, Heruābād provides an example of the “primacy model of settlement” proposed by Michael Bonine, based on his case study of Yazd, a model in which the chief city short-circuits the lesser towns. But in the case of the Khalkhal area, one could also mention a double primacy effect on two overlapping scales, since the attraction and influence of the greater city of Ardabil, appointed as the capital of a new province in 1998, has continued to grow at a rate higher than in all the adjacent districts, and its population multiplied 5 times from 83,596 inhabitants in 1966 to 418,262 in 2006.

During the same period, the greater part of the rural area has lost inhabitants. This shows that the seasonal or temporary migrations for work outside of the region have gradually turned into definitive out-migrations towards richer regions or large cities, since the local urban centers have been unable to attract all these migrants. It is not easy to gauge precisely the importance and impact of this phenomenon, since the administrative division of the area has been deeply transformed by the reform of 1998.

The region traditionally known as Khalkhal was divided by this reform (see Table 2 and map in Figure 2, prepared from the detailed database of the 2006 census of population). The former province of East Azarbaijan was split into two *ostāns*, Ardabil to the east and East Azarbaijan to the west, and the boundary between the two new units crosses the territory of Khalkhal. The entire southwestern *baḡš* of Kāḡaḍ-konān, which had tighter relations with Miāna, was attached to the Miāna district in East Azarbaijan, except for a few villages. Some villages in its northeastern corner were transferred to Hešajin, and a few in its southeastern periphery became parts of Qara Poštlu subdistrict of Zanjān. The territory remaining on the eastern side has been divided into two *šahrestāns*: Kawṭar, which corresponds to the former *baḡš* of Sanjabad, with Kivi as its center, resulting from the combination of Kivi-e Pā'in, on the northern slope of the valley of Arpā Čāy, and Kivi-e Bālā, on the



plateau above, as a single municipality. In the eastern end of Sanjabad, a group of Kurdish villages north of Heruābād have been designated as the *dehestān* of Sanjabad-e Šarqi bound to the *baḵš* of Kān Andabil of the rest of the *šahrestān* of Khalkhal, which includes the two *baḵš* of Šāhrud and Hešajin.

The district of Khalkhal in its new limits counted only 92,315 inhabitants in 2006, approximately half rural (50.8 percent) and half urban (49.8 percent), and that of Kowṭar 27,472 inhabitants (76.5 rural and 23.5 urban). If we add the population of Kāgaḍ-konān in the same year, (14,792 inhabitants, 87.7 percent rural and 12.2 urban) we arrive—with the risk of slight errors due to changes in names or delimitations of villages—at a total of 134,579 inhabitants in 2006, almost exactly the same number as forty years earlier (134,229). This stagnation becomes especially notable in view of the fact that Iran's population during the same period grew from 26,498,521 to 70,472,846, more than 166 percent. It has thus pushed this under-urbanized region, which is severely struck by emigration, to a relative marginalization, since it now accounts for 0.2 percent of the total population of the country, which used to be 0.5 percent forty years earlier.

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